



Jan's Weekly Update

Jan Ditheridge, Chief Executive

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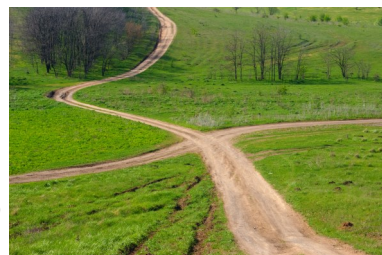


Country Dusty

That's the colour of my car most of the time. I was in a town, far from here, over the weekend and someone remarked that my car was dirty - "country dusty" I replied - a permanent state if you spend your time driving round Shropshire and probably any other rural county.

This colour was further enhanced on Bank Holiday Monday when I took myself on the grand tour of Shropshire to catch as many of our staff working as I could - to say thank you for working when many others are off, to appreciate out of hours working and spend a bit more time in places I often find myself

rushing through.



I started in Malvern, drove to Ludlow, then Bishops Castle and Bridgnorth - on to Halesfield via a well known farm shop for lunch and then up to Whitchurch and across to Oswestry. My only regret is I couldn't stretch to Shrewsbury to catch the Dentists and IDTs.

I had a lovely day - people are definitely in a different space out of hours - still busy but a bit more time to chat.

I think I spoke to or saw every patient and every member of staff.

SO WHAT DID I SEE?

I met some very poorly people and people with complicated problems being well cared for, with well thought through care plans which are person centred. I saw some real improvements in some of our environments - Ludlow have worked hard to improve things for people who are confused or just want to reminisce, Bishops Castle had thought carefully about the care of a gentleman who required extra support because he had a learning disability, all the kitchen staff everywhere had produced excellent Bank holiday food and all of the places I went looked clean and cared for. Ludlow MIU staff were upbeat and full of ideas for improvement - I left with a real buzz.

Bridgnorth MIU had been really busy - the town was full of people on the annual long charity walk (22 miles I think), the ward had had a tricky morning with acutely ill patients who were transferred and I was lucky to find the Halesfield Community nurses in as they spent most of the day out on the road - gathering country dust on their travels obviously.

We had a debate about how we attract more male nurses into community nursing and the relative merits of the satnav! Satnav stories I promised not to repeat!!

I met a nurse on her penultimate shift for us - off to pursue a new career in alternative therapies - great to be able to thank her and wish her luck in person, especially after the shift she'd had!

Things I thought could be different?



There were a lot of our patients sporting hospital nighties and PJs - not a great look. It struck me most when talking to a gentleman who had only a few weeks before been walking round a lake in Italy - in his hospital PJs it was hard to see that person and hard for him to remember who he is probably.

The little things definitely do matter - out of date health posters or guidance give a view we don't care and do a real disservice to the fantastic clinical work that's delivered every day. Image first impressions and what we have on our walls does matter.

There were a couple of issues raised with me I was able to influence - I was on call and knew who to speak to - things won't always go well but learning from it is useful. I do use the information discreetly to prompt change and learning across the system.

What made me smile? - some of the banter with the patients, the interactions I observed between staff and patients and staff camaraderie in action, and the slight awkwardness when I walked into people having a cup of tea on a hot sticky Bank holiday afternoon - I know that feeling - I remember running round all day making sure that the team get a moment at least once to sit together over a cup of tea - and in my case the Matron walks in at that very moment! This time it was me. It made me smile - it's ok to "get caught having a cup of tea" it's well deserved and important to take a break. I know you work hard.

Mental Well-Being and Young People

We are very familiar with the needs of children and young people with mental illness but are we as familiar with the mental health and well being of children, young people and their families when they have a serious physical illness? I saw a news item this week describing the unmet need of some children who have Cancer, enduring long episodes of difficult treatment, periods of absence from school, and loss of social interaction through illness. It's hard enough being an adolescent, add serious illness to that and mental well being is impacted. Some of these children get support some don't.

At our Board meeting yesterday we heard the story of a young man who has renal disease, he's experiencing lots of treatment, "needles", school absences and a future that will probably require a transplant. His mum told us what it was like to be at her son's side through all this. They both told us that one of the reasons they've got through this is because of the psychological and practical support they get from Hilary Griggs, Lead Consultant Clinical Psychologist in our Children's Therapies and her team.

The problems don't go away but with expert support they demonstrated they can get through the tough treatments, difficult decisions and uncertain future. It was a heart stopping story full of hope and strong family values. Hilary will tell you we need more services like this (she's right) if we are to support all young people and their families managing extra difficulties in their lives such as physical illness and disability. Such a pleasure to meet that family and know they are benefitting from our services.

I've used up my slot and although I've done many more things this week nothing tops my grand tour of Shropshire and meeting that young man and his mum so I'll leave it there.

I think **country dusty** is probably the new black and certainly a badge to be proud of - I may never wash it off !!!

Until next time....

Jan Ditheridge

Chief Executive

Shropshire Community Health NHS Trust

